

Pamphlet Box B1

THE SECOND COMING

OF

OUR LORD.

AN ESSAY,

BY

J. M. CRAMP, D. D.

HALIFAX, N. S.
MESSENGER PRINTING OFFICE,
69 & 71 GRANVILLE ST.
1879.

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PREFACE.

This tract is published in compliance with the request of the King's County Ministerial Conference of Baptist Ministers, for whom it was written.

I take this opportunity to express the satisfaction with which I observe the rapid spread of those Institutions. They are very useful. They encourage thought. They stimulate research. They promote union. They nurture and develope activity. And the people share in the benefits enjoyed by the ministers.

Gifts vary. One has wisdom. Another has eloquence. This brother can lucidly expound. That one can powerfully argue and persuade. Let each discern his proper gift, and use it in the best manner possible, as for the Lord.

J. M. C.



The Second Coming of our Lord.

When the time of the Lord's death drew near, he informed his disciples of the fact, and warned them that he must soon leave them, and return to the place whence he came. They were greatly disturbed by the announcement, having entertained the hope that he would assume the royalty which he was heir to, and give peace and glory to Israel, which nation had been miserably distracted by internal commotions for many years, and had been compelled to submit to the Roman yoke. To quell their anxieties, the Lord further instructed them, stating that fuller communications of truth were to be made, which would be the result of the bestowment of the Holy Spirit, and that the bestowment of the Spirit depended on the Redeemer's departure. (John xvi. 7-11.) To us, all this is very clear, but it does not appear that the disciples understood the spiritual nature of the new dispensation at that time. Their minds were beclouded by Judaism, and the light broke in upon them gradually. A distinct revelation was given to the Apostle Paul by the Lord himself, and *his views* were from the first transparent and settled, requiring no change, except by addition.

The Lord's earliest intimation on this subject was given in his closing discourse to his disciples. (John xiv. 2. 3.) About six weeks after the resurrection (Acts i. 2, 3,) he went up to heaven in the presence of his disciples, including, perhaps, many besides the twelve, (Acts v. 9-11). The expression "in the same manner," used by the angels, refers to the cloud in which the Lord was received into his heavenly dwelling. As he went up in a cloud, so he will return in a cloud. That he would return, and that in all likelihood it would be soon, became the common belief of Christians, who are especially characterised as "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," (1 Cor. i. 7.) They not only expected him to come again, but they hoped it would be in their lifetime, and that they themselves would see the Lord. (See Rev. i. 3 ; xxii. 10, 20.)

The angels who were in attendance at the Lord's ascension foretold his re-appearance, but they gave no note of time. It might be within five years. It might be five hundred. It might be five thousand. Nobody could tell. So it was left. But the "earnest expectation" of the people began to produce undesirable effects. If the world was so soon to come to an

end, why should its interests be cared for, and anxiety be cherished on behalf of that which might vanish in a moment? Industry seemed in danger of being paralysed, and religion threatened to be associated with inglorious idleness. Something required to be done to check the growing evil. The Apostle Paul interposed his authority, and sternly taught that "if any would not work, neither should he eat," (1 Thess. iii. 10.) But this did not prove sufficient, and Paul was directed to convey at the same time prophetic announcements of a forthcoming apostacy, which would overwhelm the churches, and well nigh destroy the fair hopes of God's people, (Acts xx. 29, 30; 2 Thess. ii. 1-12; 1 Tim. iv. 1-4.) Again, there was no note of time. But the prophecies were fulfilled. Long before the close of the first century, the departure from the faith had taken effect, Jewish tradition and Gentile philosophy had entered into a league against Christianity, and were as intent on its ruin as were the conspirators against the Apostle Paul, who swore that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed him. (As they did not succeed, it is fair to infer that they died of starvation.) The Lord Jesus had promised his servant that he should "bear witness for him at Rome;" (Acts xxiii. 11,) and He kept his word.

The last of the Apostles had passed away. Jesus had come but not visibly. He came at the destruction of Jerusalem. Titus and the Roman hosts were the Lord's ministers, executing his righteous vengeance. "Ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies"—He had said: "There shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." (Luke xxi. 5-24.) All came to pass, according to his word, and truthful history records the horrible details. Christians believe that the Saviour himself superintended the execution of the divine sentence. No one saw Him, for he was not bodily present; yet heathen soldiers, unconsciously obeyed the behests of the invisible Ruler:—He, meanwhile, was "within the veil."

Five hundred years had run their course. Satan, as was his wont, had been busy all the time. He revelled in blood and ruin. His servants covered the lands with dead saints, burned bibles, and demolished churches, under the orders of the emperors Decius, Valerian, and Diocletian, and men of

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that class, who fondly imagined that they had triumphed, and that Christianity was about to expire. But they had miscalculated. Jesus had said, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," (Matt. xvi. 18,) and so, though error beguiled many unstable souls, and superstitious mummeries amused the brainless, the good work went on. Many eminent men appeared, and sustained the truth by their pen: and the learned still read with satisfaction the works of Jerome, Augustine, and Chrysostom.

The next five hundred years were more perilous. Drivelling superstitions had crept in; in abundance, and were patronized by men who ought to have known better. Ritualistic childishness deprived the Church of its power. The abominations of monarcy defiled and deformed the bride of Christ. The ceremonies by which Christian worship was overloaded were rather the adoption of Pagan forms in Christian guise, than the legitimate results of gospel truth, understood and felt. A succession of public men had been kept up, but their work lacked the point, vigor, and unction of those of their predecessors, although some of them continue to adorn the shelves of clerical libraries, and are read with weariness and impatience. Here and there an extraordinary excitement sprung up, which was declared to be a revival. But medieval revivals will not abide the application of gospel tests. The tenth century exhibits the culmination of evil. Cardinal Baronius, the celebrated Roman Catholic historian, is candid enough to confess the ignorance, superstition and immorality that universally prevailed at that time, among all ranks and orders of men, including even the highest clergy. It was at this period that the world was startled by a strange phenomenon. All at once the people fell under the power of a wild notion, and its effects were surprising. A thousand years had passed away since the Saviour's birth. Misapplying Rev. xx., men agreed that the coming of the Lord was to be expected, and that he would appear in Palestine. "Immense numbers," says Mosheim, transferring their property to the churches and monasteries, left all, and proceeded to Palestine, when they supposed Christ would descend from heaven to judge the world. Others, by a solemn vow, consecrated themselves and all they possessed to the churches, the monasteries and the priests; serving them in the character of slaves, and performing the daily tasks assigned them; for they hoped that the superior Judge would

be more favorable to them, if they made themselves servants to his servants. (Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii. p. 274. Edit. London, 1845.)

The Lord saw it all, but paused not in his intercessory work. The time had not come. After a few years the tumult subsided, and affairs re-assumed their ordinary condition.

There was a healthier state of society in the sixteenth century than in the tenth. The people were not so easily frightened. They were reading the scriptures, and had learned to judge for themselves. If here and there an individual was disposed to visionary views, the bulk of Reforming congregations obeyed the dictates of common sense, and "followed the Lamb," who was among them in the power of the Spirit, bestowing the blessings of a genuine revival. Other seasons of a similar kind have been enjoyed since, in almost all parts of Europe and America, and latterly in Asia and Africa; many a "wilderness and solitary place" have been gladdened by the gospel, and tens of thousands have been educated for heaven.

But very much remains yet to be done. The Lord Jesus said to his disciples, "This gospel of the Kingdom must be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come," (Matt. xxiv. 14.) These words must be fulfilled. But how much work must be completed by the church, ere that desirable result is brought about? How many millions are there, who have not yet heard the glad tidings! What a vast amount of conversions must take place before it can be affirmed that the truth of God has been sufficiently proclaimed in any country, so as to warrant the statement the gospel has been preached there, "as a witness"—that is, that the people generally have had the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the "great salvation!" Myriads of additional labourers must be employed, and immense sums of money expended, before it can be honestly affirmed that every country now unevangelized has been blessed with the "gospel of the Kingdom." The Lord's words will not "pass away:" he has distinctly declared that his second coming waits for the issue now referred to, and depends on its development. Many of his predictions have been fulfilled over and over again, in a spiritual sense, and will continue to be so as long as the present dispensation lasts. They have what Lord Bacon calls "a springing and germinant accomplishment." He who said,

"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," (Matt. xviii, 20,) is present with his people wherever they meet, with combined love and zeal, to promote the interests of his kingdom, and his faithfulness to his promise is a matter of every day experience.

The special circumstances connected with the Lord's coming are very noteworthy. The coming is conditioned on the accomplishment of an event, which must be brought about by human instrumentality, employed in obedience to the Lord's will. The preaching of the gospel to all nations which is to precede the final arrangements of the dispensation, is the work of the Church, for which she has received the Great Commission. As in Apostolictimes, the messengers go forth, "the Lord working with them, (Mark xvi. 20.) But the messengers *must* go forth, or the Lord will not come. Those who are truly "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," can only show their sincerity by diligently working for him. And the work which requires to be done must be done more heartily. The churches must "shake themselves from the dust;" quickened activity must take place of modern dulness; the work of a hundred years must be performed in ten, or perhaps in two; and every disciple must take part in the labour. Then, when the church shall have filled the world with the gospel, she will be prepared for the arch-angel's trumpet, and will "meet the Lord in the air" with joyful satisfaction: *But not till then.*

Some, who think that the Lord's coming is near, maintain that the gospel was generally spread in apostolic times, as stated in Col. i. 6, but it is clear that the phrase "all the world" means the Roman Empire only; besides which, a large part of the world was then unknown.

If the considerations that have been now adduced are correct great responsibility rests upon all professing Christians. And great criminality is incurred by those who linger, or frame excuses for neglect. He who refuses to do his part in providing the gospel for all nations is in fact engaged in an adverse enterprise, and is doing what he can to delay the Lord's coming.

Crotchety people are seldom harmless. They may be instruments of great mischief. A singular case occurred in England about half a century ago. The Serampore brethren and the Baptist Missionary Society had disagreed, and for a number of years there were two Missionary Societies in our denomination. At length the difficulties were removed, and

a minister who had been one of the leading spirits on the Serampore side, was invited to preach one of the annual sermons on behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society. He accepted the invitation, and preached; but unfortunately he was the victim of a crotchety, and he spent the whole time of the exercise in setting forth the crotchety, and arguing for its adoption. The crotchety was this:—all missionary efforts, as at present conducted, are useless. The missionaries by whom God will convert the world will be *converted Jews*. Your object, then, should be to employ measures for the conversion of the Jews, from whom may be selected suitable agents, who will traverse heathen lands and turn the nations to God. The preacher was eloquent, and his imagination fruitful; but his exhortations fell on unwilling ears, and the Society had to lament the scantiness of the collection, for who would give in response to such an appeal?

When the Saviour foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, his disciples asked him to tell them what would be the signs of his coming, and of the end of the world. In his reply he gave no dates, but indicated certain events which must take place before his coming, though still without assigning dates. He added, "Immediately after the tribulation of these days" "he shall send his angels, with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect," &c., (Mat. xxiv. 29-31); but the Lord has not come. His other predictions have been fulfilled, and their fulfilment is recorded in history. God's "immediately" may differ much from ours; "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter iii. 8). So with the word "quickly" used by the Lord Jesus, in dictating the closing sentences of the Apocalypse—"Surely, I come quickly" (Rev. xxii. 20). It is the year of grace, 1879, and the Lord has not come. He *will come*, but neither man nor angel can say *when*.

The diversity of opinions on this subject is marvellous. In proportion to the obscurity of a theme is the positivity with which some men pronounce upon it, holding their own views to be correct, and all others erroneous. Those who do not understand the true method of interpreting figurative language (and their number is large) are apt to make sad blunders. Explaining figures literally, they impute to the sacred writers the oddest fancies, and represent them as fathers of most ridiculous notions. In interpreting the book of Revelation folios of dreariness have been written, enough.

to make all compositors and printers' apprentices "stare and gasp." Even Caxton would have been scared at them.

Some of the advocates of the early coming of our Lord have proposed a novel interpretation of Matt. xxiv. 14, hoping thereby to remove certain difficulties out of the way. They would have us believe that the Saviour did not intend us to expect a general diffusion of the gospel among the nations, but only that it should be so presented everywhere as to be "a witness" to the country. A Missionary, for instance, might stop for a few hours at some populous island, gather a few scores of the inhabitants on the beach, and preach a sermon, by the aid of an interpreter, departing thence to the next people. This, it is said, would be the preaching of the gospel in that island, "for a witness." But can it be imagined that our Lord meant anything less than such an introduction of the gospel as would give all the inhabitants of the country in question an opportunity of learning its truths, and examining and deciding on its claims, to be followed by such an effectual blessing as would result from the ingathering of converts into churches, and the production of a rich harvest of spiritual fruits? This process will have to be repeated in every land till Isa. xi. 9 is fulfilled. Dr. Watts, as it appears to us, has versified the right interpretation:—

"Sun, moon, and stars convey thy praise
Round the whole earth, and never stand;
For, when thy truth began its race,
It touched and glanced on every land;

Nor shall thy spreading gospel rest,
Till through the world thy truth has run;
Till Christ has all the nations blessed
That see the light or feel the sun."

The twentieth chapter of the book of Revelation is a favourite portion with prophetic students. That chapter is the most obscure of all the chapters in God's Book. It bristles with difficulties, sufficiently appalling to the modest critic. How much is to be understood literally, and how much spiritually, need not be here discussed. The "first resurrection," however, may be confidently set down as *spiritual*. The probability is, that it will not be thoroughly understood till it is seen by its own light: the fulfilment will be the interpretation.

One remark, however, may be permitted. The twentieth chapter represents a glorious episode in the history of Christ's Church; its progress and development may spread

over many centuries. But whether the time be long or short, it will be borne in mind that all will *precede* the Lord's coming, and be preparatory to it. This observation does not refer to the last paragraph of the vision, comprising verses 11 to 17, in which the writer anticipates the final judgment, and gives a brief sketch, substantially similar to other passages in the New Testament. See Mat. xxv. 24-48; John v. 28-30; Acts xvii. 31; Rom xiv. 10; 2 Cor. v. 10; 2 Tim. iv. 1, 7, 8.

Other episodes are contained in the same book. Each seal, trumpet, and vial is a separate one. But dates are altogether wanting, and landmarks are dimly discernible. As the time draws near, thrilling experiences will be enjoyed by God's people who will then be dwelling on the earth, and who will see and hear much with which not only we, but those also who will succeed us in the next ages, must be content to be unacquainted. But the times of ignorance are shortening.

The general conclusions may now be briefly stated:—

I. The Lord Jesus will come again "the second time without sin, unto salvation" (Heb. ix. 28). He has promised to come, and He will come, for He is "the faithful and true witness" (Rev. iii. 14).

Now, He is within the veil, performing the duties of the high priest's office—interposing, as far as is needful, in the management of the concerns of the Church—and governing the world. Let us often think of Him as actually engaged in our behalf, and let us not be unmindful of the "hope set before us," of which we are in fact reminded whenever we celebrate the Lord's Supper. "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." (1 Cor. xi. 26).

II. The time is not fixed. It is fixed in God's decree, but it is not revealed to any of his creatures. "The day will declare it." All we know is, that it will come suddenly, unexpectedly, "as a thief in the night."

III. The purposes for which the Lord will come are clearly set forth:—

1. He will come to bring this dispensation to a close. This will involve a series of sore judgments, affecting the material interests of the world, and the world itself, all being doomed to destruction, (see 2 Pet. iii.); it will also include the termination of the mediatorial kingdom of the Saviour (1 Cor. xv. 24-28).

2. He will come to complete the happiness of his people, (John xiv. 3).

3. He will come to sit as Judge of the human race, and award to all their final allotments.

IV. Certain practical considerations demand serious attention.

1. We must be content to remain ignorant on many important points. The number of those points will increase the longer we live. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing," [Prov. xxv. 2]. And when HE conceals it, woe be to the vain man who thinks himself competent to search it out, and puzzles his brain and wastes his time in the endeavour. The Apostle Paul said, "If a man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know," [1 Cor. viii. 2] : and the Apostle Paul was a true philosopher.

The writings of Archbishop Whately contain many observations on this subject, which may be profitably studied by all who are desirous of being regarded as thinkers; especially his "Logic," and his "Annotations on Lord Bacon's Essays."

2. Let us avoid dogmatism. An old friend of ours was accustomed to say when various opinions were referred to in conversation, "A good deal may be said in favour of that view." Our friend's own views were rather broad, and he was very averse to dogmatism on any matter, in which respect he may be safely imitated. It is disgusting to hear shallow minded men talk in favor of their peculiar notions, assuming airs of authority, and demanding submission to their dogmas.

Opposed to dogmatism is *indifference*—a state of mind equally or even more dangerous. We have need to guard against it, as it often proves to be the parent of unbelief. The outcry raised in these times against *dogma*, as it is called, is as senseless as it is mischievous. There is a medium course, which an honest searcher after truth will have no great difficulty in finding.

3. Public instructors should shun speculations in their teaching. The reference is to the pulpit. It is rarely desirable for a preacher to unfold the *method* of a process. The results only need to be placed before an audience, accompanied by such explanations as will tend to satisfy intelligent hearers.

A singular case occurred many years ago in London. The pastor of one of our churches in that city had employed himself in some speculations, partly philosophical, partly theo-

logical, and had thrown the result, the argument included into a sermon. Being invited to preach a missionary sermon in Kent, he took that sermon with him, and preached it, but soon discovered that he had made a mistake. No one understood him, and consequently no interest was felt, and the good man expressed afterwards his regret that he had not preached a plain gospel sermon, which would have warmed all hearts and opened all pockets.

4. Great care is required in the choice of texts on the subject of this paper. An uncritical reader of the Scriptures (many preachers are found in that category) notes a number of passages, some in the Psalms, some in the prophets, and some in the New Testament, which speak of the coming of the Lord as a most desirable event, and give assurance of its certainty. These passages are supposed to relate to the Lord's second coming, and are so uniformly interpreted. But it is overlooked or forgotten that the coming of the Lord have been numerous, sometimes of a judicial character; sometimes merciful, and that Jesus himself used language to his disciples which was evidently susceptible of a twofold application, partly to the fall of Jerusalem, and partly to the final judgement. There is a dividing line somewhere, and a transference from one event to the other is supposed to exist; but there is a want of agreement among the best judges as to the proper place for it, and it is an allowable inference that great caution is requisite in the choice of texts.

5. Insoluble difficulties and irreconcilable conclusions must be expected.

We have to do with imagery of the wildest, grandest kind. The Easterns surpass all other people in this particular, and the writer of the Apocalypse surpasses all other Easterns, having, besides, this speciality, that it is a prophetic book, abounding in figures, but altogether wanting in dates. Whatever system of interpretation we may choose to adopt, we shall find ourselves so perplexed by digressions, and episodes, and side-lights, that it may be safely deemed the wiser course to give up attempts at explanation, and satisfy ourselves with the belief and expectation of the Lord's coming, leaving questions of time and manner, and attendant circumstances, to be answered by the event itself. "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."

V. The order of proceedings on "that day" is briefly stated in the New Testament, and may be now sketched, as far as the materials are supplied.

It must be supposed, then, that the preliminary events have occurred. All the seals have been opened ;—all the trumpets have been blown ;—all the vials have been poured out ; all the visions of the Apocalypse, the various, obscure and conflicting metaphors, which have exhausted the efforts of the mightiest minds of Christendom to explain them, have been fulfilled. The time of the consummation has come. The transaction of affairs of all kinds is going on as usual ; no uncommon tokens of divine manifestations have been presented to notice, except, it may be, some remarkable displays of power in missionary stations, such as have gladdened God's people for many years, and occasioned a revival of that watching, waiting state of mind which is evidently agreeable to the Lord's will.

1. On some wondrously bright morning all eyes are turned to the appearance of a cloud unlike all other clouds, gradually covering the hemisphere, and moving towards the earth. The Lord is there, with his escort of "mighty angels," coming to wind up all affairs, and "make all things new." He is not seen as yet but his presence is felt, and consciousness of the fact begins to spread among God's servants, producing ecstatic joy, while others are filled with trembling apprehension, crying "The great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" [Rev. vi. 17.]

2. There will be a "great sound of a trumpet," and forthwith squadrons of angels will leave the clouds in every direction, whose mission will be to raise the "dead in Christ," and gather in God's elect "from one end of the heaven to the other." This will be "the first resurrection," the event so termed in Rev. xx. as has been already remarked, is clearly of a spiritual kind, one of those highly-wrought figures with which the Apocalypse abounds. It is Christ's prerogative to raise the dead, and he employs the instrumentality of angels for the purpose. We must not omit, however, to observe, that the bodies which will be raised will be spiritual bodies ; there will be nothing fleshly about them, for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," [1 Cor. xv. 50.] We do not know what a "spiritual body" is ; but we shall "know hereafter."

3. This being done, the saints then living in the world will be prepared to meet the Lord. They will not die, but they will be "changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump" [1 Cor. xv. 52] for Christ shall "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his own

glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself" [Phil. iii. 21.] A new power of locomotion will be given them, and they will be able with ease to ascend to the cloud and "meet the Lord in the air." That will be the most glorious assembly ever convened. The sun never shone upon anything like it.

4. We do not inquire about time and place, for we are out of the region of those things. All that we can now say is, that the next transaction to be considered is the last judgement. We have an account of this great event in the words of our Lord himself, who has told us as much as we are to be permitted to know in the present state. These are his words:—

"When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on the right hand, but the goats on the left."

Neither our Lord nor any one of his apostles has given any account of the *process* of the judgment. There are great blanks which cannot be filled up. The separation, general and final, seems to be the act of judgment. Omniscience is on the throne, and the effect of His presence is felt throughout the vast assembly. Every individual's conscience is awake—and active—and true, securing in all cases a just and unerring decision, which is immediately carried into effect. There will be no mistake. Not a sheep will be found among the goats, nor a goat among the sheep. Every individual will be in his or her "own place."

The Lord proceeds—

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.'

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, 'Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee, or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in, or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto thee, Verily I say unto you,

Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'

" Then shall he say also unto those on the left hand, (who appear to have been raised from the dead at the same time, or nearly so, as the saints, See John v. 28, 29.) Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels ; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in ; naked, and ye clothed me not ; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

" Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee ?

Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment ; but the righteous into everlasting life?"

AND THEY WILL ALL GO.

VI. This will be the end of the Gospel dispensation. All power was given unto the Saviour, " in heaven and in earth." He was commissioned to govern the nations, and he did govern them, though they know it not. They executed His will, while they thought that they were performing their own pleasure, and securing their own glory. At the same time He has cared for the interests of the Church, in every part of the world ; in raising up and sending forth gifted men, by whose instrumentality the cause of truth and holiness has been maintained, revived, and defended ; in preventing the success of wicked schemes, and making the " wrath of man to praise Him," [Ps. lxxvi. 10], and in bestowing all manner of spiritual blessings on his servants. " Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace, (John i. 17), that is, grace answering to His grace ; the fulness belongs to the Church, and is continually imparted, and will be as long as need requires. " Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father ; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under his feet. And when all things shall be subdued unto him ; then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all," (1 Cor. xv. 24-28).

Then will a passage in the old record receive its amplest

verification :—“There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel ; all came to pass.” (Josh. xxi. 45.)

We know not what arrangements will follow this dispensation : But we may venture to affirm that “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost” will be as precious and as powerful in the experience of the saints in their final dwelling-place, as in their pilgrimage-state formerly on the earth, and that the Hallelujahs of the saved, in honour of “the Lamb that was slain” will be heard for ever all over the plains of heaven, to its widest extent.

VII. The general conflagration will follow. *When* and *how* we know not. But here is the authority :—

“The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night ; in the which, the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat ; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” [2 Peter iii. 10.]

Many questions might be asked ; to none of which any answer could be given in the present state of our knowledge. We might quote poetry by the bushel—but with what result ? Spiritualists and dreamers might cover reams of paper with ink—all uselessly. Darkness rests upon the prospect. All we can say is, that every thing around us is doomed to the fire.

VIII. The new heaven and the new earth :

Where ? We do not know, for no sufficient clue is given. From the last two chapters of the book of Revelation we might gather that this earth is intended ; but the figurative and the literal are so mingled in those chapters that a satisfactory decision is hardly attainable. Still it must be granted that many divines have held that this world, purified by the conflagration will be the abode of the blessed ; though, how stones and earth can be purified by being burnt is difficult to be conceived ; perhaps, however, all that is meant is, that the exclusion of the wicked will itself be a purification. “There shall in no wise enter into it [the new Jerusalem] any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.” (Rev. xxi. 27.)

Yes—“Thy people also shall be all righteous” [Isa ix. 20.] No mere professors or hypocrites will be seen there. The wants, desires and habits of the redeemed host will be so different from those of earth, every thing fleshly

having ceased to exist, and marriages, births, sickness and death being unknown, every saint existing in a spiritual body, that a clear idea of the state of society in the new world is not to be looked for, and probably would not be comprehensible. But of this, we may be certain, that all truth will be discovered, and correctly received ; that all holy affections will be perfected, and in constant exercise ; that every member of the glorified Church will be heard exclaiming, " **THY WILL BE DONE** ;" and that throughout the wide extent of the vast territory occupied by God's servants, they will be all " of one heart and one soul," (Acts iv. 32), as they were at the first. There will be no controversies. Divisions will be reported dead and buried. Strife, hatred, suspicion, unbelief, will be only known as things of the past, *and there will never be any reaction.*

Finally, the Lord Jesus will be there. " We shall be like Him," says the beloved disciple, " for we shall see Him as He is," [1 John iii. 2]. " They are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in His temple : and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears [better, " *every tear*"] from their eyes, " [Rev. vii. 15-17]. " **AND SO SHALL WE EVER BE WITH THE LORD,**" [1 Thess. iv. 18.]

" For ever with the Lord ?"
Amen ! So let it be ;
Life from the dead is in that word—
" Tis immortality.

Here in the body pent,
Absent from Him, I roam,
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent,
A day's march nearer home.

My Father's house on high,—
Home of my soul,—how near,
At times, to faith's foreseeing eye,
The golden gates appear !

" **Forever with the Lord** " !
Father, if 'tis Thy will,
The promise of that faithful word,
E'en here to me fulfil."

—JAMES MONTGOMERY.

J. M. CRAMP.